

A GROUP DYNAMICS EFFECTIVENESS FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL BEHAVIOUR: LEARNED EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN SELF-HELP GROUPS IN AGRICULTURE

MERCYKUTTY MJ¹, SMITHA BABY² & AJIT T. G³

¹Associate Professor, Department of Agricultural Extension, College of Horticulture, Kerala Agricultural University,
Vellanikkara, Thrissur, Kerala, India

²Assistant Professor, Central Training Institute, Kerala Agricultural University, Mannuthy, Kerala, India

³PG Student, Department of Agricultural Extension, College of Horticulture, Kerala Agricultural University,
Vellanikkara, Thrissur, Kerala India

ABSTRACT

One of the most powerful approaches to rural entrepreneurship is the formation of the Self Help Groups (SHGs) especially among women. Collective farming by women SHGs was promoted in Kerala as a strategy to enhance the livelihood options of poor women. Many SHGs have been set up of micro enterprises by value addition of agricultural products. A study was undertaken to analyze the group dynamics effectiveness of SHGs in agriculture and its relationship with entrepreneurial behaviour. The study was conducted in six selected SHGs with agriculture and agripreneurship activities. One SHG each was selected from six selected panchayats of six blocks of Thrissur District. The group dynamics of each SHG was quantified by using an index called Group Dynamics Effectiveness Index (GDEI), consisting of 12 dimensions. The Kruskal –Wallis one way analysis showed considerable variation in group dynamics effectiveness among different groups. There were significant differences between different SHGs in case of six indicators viz; commitment, leadership, interpersonal trust, adherence to group norms, empathy and achievement of SHG. Out of six SHGs, two SHGs possessed higher scores for most of the dimensions. The study also revealed that more than 70 per cent of the members possessed medium entrepreneurial index. The relationship between group dynamics effectiveness and entrepreneurial behavior was analyzed. Out of twelve dimensions, then possessed highly significant relationship with entrepreneurial behaviour. Leadership and group cohesiveness had highest correlation coefficients compared to other dimensions.

KEYWORDS: Group Dynamics Effectiveness & Entrepreneurial Behaviour

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INTRODUCTION

A group is a cluster of two or more individuals who interact with each other on a relatively enduring basis, identify themselves as belonging to distinct unit and sharing certain common activities and values. Self Help Group can be described as a small and economically homogeneous affinity group of rural poor voluntarily formed to save and mutually contribute to a common fund to BE lent to its members. Self Help Groups are seen as instruments for a variety of goals, including empowering women, developing leadership abilities and delivering micro-finance services to poor populations that have been otherwise difficult to reach directly through banks or other institutions.

Collective farming by women SHGs was promoted in Kerala as a strategy to enhance the livelihood options of poor women. It will improve their family income and also contribute to the food security of the state. Many SHGs have been set up of micro enterprises by value addition of agricultural products and other local resources. It is worth mentioning that SHGs act as a resource centre for empowering women members to take up these kinds of entrepreneurial activities. SHGs provide a platform for enhancing their capability, efficiency and decision making capacity leading to successful entrepreneurship

SHG is viewed as an opportunity for providing gainful employment to the people below small scale rural enterprises. It will further lead to innovative and creative activities suited to the specific environment of the community by using the technological know-how already available. The success and sustainability of Self help groups often depend upon the group behaviour and achievements contributing to steady income catalysed by suitable entrepreneurial ventures. The importance of group dynamics effectiveness, which is responsible for the better performance and entrepreneurial success need to be thoroughly understood and activated on a sustainable basis. Successful teamwork is a factor influencing the outcome of any form of group activity. In light of this, a study was undertaken to analyse the group dynamics effectiveness of SHGs in agriculture and its relationship with entrepreneurial behaviour.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design Used for the Study

The present study is based on the exploratory design of social research to analyse the group dynamics effectiveness and entrepreneurial behaviour of women SHG members involved in agriculture and agripreneurship activities.

Locale of the Study & Selection of Respondents

The study was undertaken in Thrissur district of Kerala state during 2017. A multi –stage purposive random sampling was followed in the selection of blocks and Panchayats. Among the 17 blocks of Thrissur district, six blocks viz., Kodakara, Talikkulam, Puzhakkal, Anthikkad, Cherppu and Ollukkara were selected. From these blocks one panchayat each with intensive agricultural activities was selected. From each panchayat one active SHG focusing on agriculture and agripreneurship activities was selected randomly. The selected SHGs had completed more than 5 years and having more than 10 active members. Totally six SHGs were selected and 10 members each from these SHGs constituted a sample size of 60. Detailed case studies on the high performing SHGs were also made.

MEASUREMENT OF GROUP DYNAMICS AND ENTREPRENEURIAL BEHAVIOUR

Group Dynamics

Group dynamics is the interaction and interpersonal relationships between members of a group and the ways in which groups form, function, and dissolve. It is an important aspect of successful teamwork and is a factor influencing the outcome of any form of group activity. Issues of power, influence, and interpersonal conflict will affect dynamics and group performance. The 12 identified group dynamics effectiveness dimensions are participation, team work, commitment, group decision making, group cohesiveness, leadership, interpersonal trust, task functions, record keeping, adherence to group norms, empathy and achievement of SHG. All these dimensions were measured by a set of inventories containing appropriate questions. The scale developed by *Purnima (2005)* with suitable modifications was used to measure the Group dynamics effectiveness. The total score of GDEI for an individual was also found.

Entrepreneurial behaviour of women SHG members is operationally defined as the cumulative outcome of 13 components, namely Innovativeness, Achievement motivation, Decision making ability, Planning ability, coordinating ability, Self-confidence. Risk taking ability, Leadership ability, Credit orientation, Information seeking behaviour, Market Perception, Problem solving capacity and Profit orientation. All these dimensions were measured by a set of inventories containing appropriate questions. Entrepreneurial behavior was measured using the index formula followed by Wankhade et al (2013).

A structured interview schedule was developed for the study to collect the response and face to face interview with the respondents was carried out to collect the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Group Dynamics Effectiveness

The variation in group dynamics effectiveness among different groups are shown in the Table.1. The twelve components were considered while developing the group dynamics effectiveness index. The Kruskal –Wallis one way test shows that considerable variation in group dynamics effectiveness among different groups. The table shows that there were significant differences between different SHGs in case of seven dimensions viz; commitment, group cohesiveness, leadership, record keeping, adherence to group norms empathy and achievement of SHG.

Commitment is the willingness to give the time and energy to something that the members believe in, or a promise or firm decision to do something. Among the SHGs, significant difference was observed. Even though within the group, members possess some common characteristics, there is variation in their commitment. Between and within the groups, there were differences among the psychological and socio economic characteristics. The SHG: 1 showed the highest score in commitment.

Group cohesiveness contributes heavily towards group dynamics through enhancing mutual helping nature. It was observed that trustworthiness and comparable wavelength of the members within the group encouraged decision making on various activities.

Group leadership refers to the effectiveness of leaders in promoting the stability and success of the group. It also encourages members to behave freely among the group without any formality or inhibition. It is also influenced by the initiative, drive and energy of the individuals. Among the six SHGs, SHG: 1 had the highest scores.

Interpersonal trust can be described as liking towards others and trust in others that developed over a period of time due to constant interaction with the members or simply it is the trust among the group members. Behavioural characteristics of the members contribute to interpersonal trust. Depending on the personality of the individuals there will be differences among groups.

Keeping up-to-date records is vital to the success of any business endeavour. Accurate, reliable and easy methodology will improve the sustainability of the group by promoting group dynamics.

Rogers and Shoemaker(1971) established positive and significant relationship of empathy with interaction behaviour efficiency in groups.

Table 1: Comparison of SHGs :Kruskal Wallis Test

Sl. No.	Dimension	Kruskal Wallis Test (n = 10 each)						H Value
		SHG: 1	SHG: 2	SHG: 3	SHG: 4	SHG: 5	SHG: 6	
1	Participation	29.75 (2)	37 (1)	29.25 (3)	28.75 (4)	27 (6)	28.25 (5)	2.332
2	Team Spirit and team work	30.5 (4)	31.0 (3)	31.5 (2)	31.5 (2)	32.6 (1)	24.5 (4)	1.753
3	Commitment	45.1 (1)	28.5 (3)	28.2 (4)	27.5 (5)	29.9 (2)	22.5 (6)	12.012*
4	Group Decision Making	34.5 (2)	41.5 (1)	26.75 (3)	26.20 (5)	25.75 (4)	25.25 (6)	8.705
5	Group Cohesiveness	43.1 (1)	39 (2)	24.5 (4)	23.6 (6)	27.4 (3)	24.0 (4)	16.475**
6	Leadership	48 (1)	38 (2)	24.25 (3)	23.2 (3)	24.25 (3)	24.25 (3)	22.259**
7	Interpersonal trust	34.85 (2)	41.5 (1)	28.5 (3)	28.5 (3)	24.25 (4)	23.25 (5)	9.735**
8	Task functions	35.75 (1)	27.5 (3)	27.2 (4)	26.1 (5)	24.25 (6)	34 (2)	2.634
9	Record keeping	35.7 (2)	43.5 (1)	30.5 (3)	29.5 (4)	24.25 (5)	17.5 (6)	21.388
10	Adherence to group norms	37.3 (2)	47.75 (1)	25.75 (3)	24.25 (5)	23.25 (6)	24.75 (4)	20.156**
11	Empathy	30.9 (3)	22.75 (4)	37.5 (1)	37.0 (2)	24.25 (5)	22.25 (6)	12.194*
12	Achievement of SHG	35 (1)	34.5 (2)	31.8 (4)	33 (3)	24.25 (5)	12.5 (6)	16.389**

() Ranks $A = \pi r^{-2}$ Given in Parenthesis.

** Significant at 1 Per Cent.

* Significant at 5 Per Cent.

It is also stated that empathy as the feeling of another person's feelings; or perceiving something as does another person. It is one of the integral qualities for the effective group performance. Or it is described as the ability an individual to project oneself into the role of another person, to be able to appreciate the feelings, thinking and actions of another person.

It is stated that group goal achievement is the extent of member's involvement in achieving it. If there is full involvement then group goals will be achieved without any difficulty. It is observed that the achievements of group objectives as a vital factor affecting the Group Dynamics and an indispensable component contributing to its effectiveness.

Among the six SHGs the SHG:1 and SHG:2 had higher scores for most of the dimensions. The SHG:1 had the highest scores for commitment, group cohesiveness, leadership, task functions and achievement while SHG:2 recorded highest scores for participation, group decision making, interpersonal trust and record keeping. It can be seen that 1st and 2nd ranks of a majority of the dimensions were shared among SHG:1 and SHG:2.

The major dimensions having influence on the variation in group dynamics effectiveness are discussed. Regarding the SHG: 1, highest scores for commitment, group cohesiveness, leadership, task functions and achievement were recorded. High level of commitment among the members was observed. It was also evident that group members were associated with one another and were highly motivated to remain in the group leading to high group cohesiveness. The presence of a strong, dynamic leader has been identified as the most significant factor for the successful functioning and sustainability of this SHG. Usually a person with some previous experience or competence to discharge the various

functional responsibilities of SHG is selected as the leader. Different trainings imparted to the selected members enabled them to discharge their duties with ease. Task functions are important dimensions of Group Dynamics, which relate to the behaviour that is concerned with getting the job done. To perform the task functions one has to watch for members who keep the group on target and those who get off on target. It is said that if task functions are clear, the quality of performance can be more easily controlled and group members can be held more definitely responsible for performance. The role of leader to organize and define the role of the members of their group; to explain what activities each is to do and when, where, and how the tasks are to be accomplished, characterized by well-defined patterns will result in better achievement.

SHG:2 recorded the highest ranks in the dimensions via; participation, group decision making, interpersonal trust and record keeping. It is a known fact that groups cannot be built overnight. Group formation is a slow, time-consuming process. Once the members get the crux of the goals and realise the benefits, they would remain loyal throughout and never leave the group. When the group becomes stabilised in its functioning, internal factors like participation, good leadership, unity, interpersonal trust, mutual understanding among the members and group decision making determine the pace of growth and development. Another factor transparency is also ensured by proper record keeping which in turn contribute to better performance.

Entrepreneurial Behaviour of SHG Members

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents According to their Level of Entrepreneurial Behaviour (N=60)

Category	No.	%	Mean	SD
Low (<70.65)	7	11.66	74.27	3.61
Medium (70.65 to 77.87)	43	71.67		
High (>77.87)	10	16.67		
Total	60	100.00		

Micro enterprises really helps to develop entrepreneurs and to generate employment for a number of people within their own social system and is the best tool for rural women as it enables them to add to the family income while taking care of their own home centered tasks.

Data regarding the entrepreneurial behavior of the respondents in Table 2 revealed that 71.67 per cent had medium entrepreneurial index while 16.67 per cent and 11.66 per cent had high and low index respectively. It may be noted that majority of the SHG members have been trained on various agricultural and agribusiness activities. Moreover they have been continuing their ventures successfully. It was observed that SHG members were provided with number of trainings on different aspects of farming and agribusiness by various agencies like KAU, Krishi Bhavan, Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) and NGOs. Most of the SHG members have perceived considerable improvement in their skill and competency to carry out the enterprises they have undertaken. Apart from the trainings they have received field level experiences and the group efficacy has also contributed to the development of their capacities. Participation in the activities, from planning to marketing, has given the confidence to continue farming and value addition as the means of their livelihood.

Table 3: Relationship between Group Dynamics Dimensions with Entrepreneurial Behaviour

Sl. No	Dimension	Coefficient of Correlation 'r'
1	Participation	0.453**
2	Team Spirit and team work	0.671**
3	Commitment	0.670**
4	Group Decision Making	0.654**
5	Group Cohesiveness	0.755**
6	Leadership	0.781**
7	Interpersonal trust	0.649**
8	Task functions	0.608**
9	Record keeping	0.131
10	Adherence to group norms	0.701**
11	Empathy	0.112
12	Achievement of SHG	0.478**

** Significant at 1% Level.

The correlation between the group dynamics dimensions and entrepreneurial behaviour shows that out of 12 dimensions, 10 had a high positive correlation (Table3). Leadership dimension followed by group cohesiveness and adherence to group norms recorded higher coefficients compared to other dimensions. This implies that when the group dynamics dimensions are encouraged with proper wattage, entrepreneurial ability can be boosted and thus rural entrepreneurship can be promoted.

Agarwal (2010) has pointed out that group based agriculture facilitates labour sharing and easy substitution and was also visualized in the better management of the enterprise compared to individual farmers.

Brief details of the highly successful SHGs, are furnished as follows.

The most promising SHG is 'Kadaleevanam' SHG (SHG: 1) at Mattathur Panchayat of Kodakara Block. It is functioning under the able leadership of Smt. Indira Lorenz, a civil engineering graduate from Delhi University. She has been trained from various institutes. She has been encouraging her fellow group members also. She is a laureate of various awards which include *Sramasakthi*, state award for the best agricultural labourer. She acts as a source of inspiration to her colleagues. She does the operations in her field by herself and also provides services to other farmers when needed. The group consists of 20 members with educational qualifications ranging from primary education to graduation level. Most of the members have an experience of five to ten years in farming. SHG has a core committee of 10 members which includes a convener, a joint convener and other representatives. This core committee takes major decisions on the activities undertaken by the SHG. The major activities of the SHG includes crop cultivation, cattle rearing, goat rearing, poultry. Regarding farming, paddy, millet, pulses, banana, vegetables and tuber crops are cultivated. Both high yielding and traditional varieties of paddy are cultivated. It is cultivated in an area of 50 acres of leased land. It is worth mentioning to note that paddy cultivation is fully mechanized. The cattle rearing include indigenous local breeds like *Vechoor*, *Cheruvalli*, and *Kasarkodan*. Poultry rearing includes 10-20 nos of hen per person. Goat rearing includes 10 goats and the breed reared is *Malabari*. The group gives importance to processing and value addition of products from their field. The processed products of millets and jackfruit are packed and marketed.

They collect seeds from the traditional farmers, KAU and Krishibhavan and follows Good Agricultural Practices (GAP). Most of the members have got trained from Kerala Agricultural University, Veterinary University and other leading NGOs.

It is also important to note that most of the members had opined that their income has more than doubled after joining the self help group. They get a regular and better market for their produce and enjoy easy access to loans and advances.

The second promising SHG under study is 'Sambadya' SHG. This is a very active SHG and was selected as the best Kudumbasree unit of Tholur Gramapanchayath of Puzhakkal Block. This SHG consists of 16 members residing in the neighboring area. This SHG is run under the able leadership of Smt. Sunitha. There is also a *Balasabha* named as 'Nakshathra' associated with this SHG. The members are very keen in attending trainings and they have attended different trainings from ARS Mannuthy, KAU and Krishibhavan.

The SHG has three JLGs. The main activities involved are paddy cultivation, vegetable cultivation, processing, cattle rearing, tailoring, and pen making. Own labour is utilized and the profit is shared among the members. The loan is availed from District Co-operative Bank at 4 percent interest per annum. The harvest is being done using combine harvester and produce is procured by Supply Co. One JLG is doing processing of vegetables. Thus, they are able to utilize their leisure hours for increasing their income. Marketing support is provided to all members through the group level marketing. According to the members, the main inspirations for joining the SHG were to overcome the exploitation from the money lenders, easy access to loans and regular market for their produce. They are very much satisfied with the working of SHG. All the members are satisfied with the adequacy of market infrastructure

CONCLUSIONS

Focusing on pooling of strength and expertise of rural women folk and giving them the opportunity to work together could bring positive changes in the society. Involving in group activities offers women an opening to come out of their bondage, to accept new challenges and to face adverse situations jointly and help to increase their confidence to a great extent. The study throws light on the various dimensions of group dynamics effectiveness, which are high in better performing SHGs and those contribute to entrepreneurial success. Group dynamics of SHGs could influence its functioning and level of performance. Each identified component of group dynamics effectiveness was analyzed.

Group dynamics effectiveness can be enhanced through suitable training methodologies which can also contribute to entrepreneurial competencies to face future challenges. Moreover, capacity building programmes should focus on areas like marketing skills, quality improvement, procedural knowledge about availing financial assistance, handling legal issues and social networking which would determine their Entrepreneurial success. However, women should try to engage in activities involving more amounts of funds and more skilled work so that higher amount of profit can be generated. Instead of marketing by an individual SHG unit which is expensive and difficult, cluster approach should be followed and branding the product can be promoted. If they collaborate the activities and market their products under a single brand name with quality certification, unhealthy competition among too many tiny units can be avoided. In rural areas, setting up of village level primary processing facilities may be both remunerative and employment intensive and would definitely create opportunities for nonfarm work during off seasons.

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